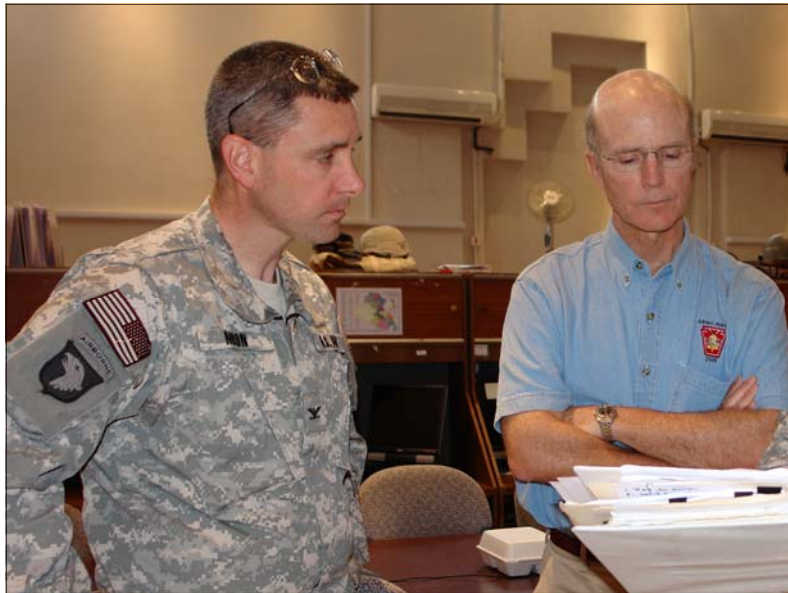




For Immediate Release  
January 13, 2008  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## ***Multi-Pronged USACE Effort To Improve Electricity Sector In Iraq***

By John Connor  
Gulf Region South District



Col. Michael Moon, electricity sector lead for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division, briefs Pete Geren, the Secretary of the Army, during his recent visit to Baghdad. (Photo courtesy of USACE)

The challenges in rebuilding Iraq's electrical infrastructure are formidable, says the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division's electrical sector lead.

Col. Michael Moon has a full plate working on USACE's \$4 billion in electrical projects and helping Iraq's Ministry of Electricity elevate the country's system to something the Iraqis can depend on in their daily lives.

On top of decades of neglect, the ravages of war and ongoing security concerns, Moon said, the power industry is

booming globally, which makes the lead time on major components lengthy, and qualified and available people in short supply.

The Ministry of Electricity – Dr. Karim Hasan – has developed a capital requirements plan that exceeds \$27 billion and will take five to 10 years to achieve a world-class national grid, generation, transmission and distribution, Karim predicts.

While the export of crude oil is now steady, the challenges Iraq now faces are a cumbersome financial and procurement

system, as well as continued security issues.

"At present, most large U.S. and western firms are reluctant to bid on the MoE's major projects, citing security concerns and the problems with the banking/financial systems," Moon said. However, Moon added, "There is interest and we are beginning to work with Department of Commerce representatives to assist the MoE in improving his systems to attract U.S./western bidders."

Recently, the MoE negotiated two large contracts for power projects, one with a Chinese company for nearly \$1 billion and the other with a Russian firm.

"Until U.S. and Western companies return to bid on these types of major contracts, the MoE will have to rely on the Chinese and Russians," Moon said. Meanwhile, USACE is actively engaged with the MoE on a number of fronts.

Add into the equation the fact that the power industry is booming globally.

"Lead time for major components, like a 400 kV transformer, is 12-plus months," Moon said. "There is a lack of qualified people for the demand across the globe. There is a three- to five-year backlog of power generation in the U.S. alone. GE has already sold out of Frame 9 turbines through 2008. China and India are adding substantially to their energy sector and both require huge resources that impact the rest of the world."

USACE is doing its part through its "teams in major power plants, coaching, teaching and mentoring the Iraqi plant managers and technicians," Moon said. There also are regular meetings between

the Dr. Karim, the DoS senior electrical consultant, and Moon. "Discussion covers the full range of operations and planning, from strategic issues to maintenance and sustainment and capacity development and training," he said.

USACE and the Iraq Transition Assistance Office (ITAO) have put together a Ministerial Engagement Team that works on long-range strategic goals with the MoE staff. Additionally, a Ministerial Liaison Team assists with coordination and planning with the MoE's subordinate director generals. The team is fluent in Arabic and are technically qualified in the engineering/electrical field.

It's a team effort, Moon said. USACE, ITAO and the MoE are working together to jumpstart the nation's electrical infrastructure. But ultimately, Moon said, it will be up to the MoE and the people of Iraq.

"The ME is working hard for the people of Iraq and there are many dedicated employees throughout the Ministry of Electricity," Moon said. "From repair crews for transmission and distribution lines to plant managers and technicians, these dedicated Iraqis are working courageously to improve the electricity service to the people and improve the economic potential of the Iraq."

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